

India, Calcutta for their valued information based on which this article has been written.

I am also thankful to my friend Shri Suradas Ghosh who helped me in many respects.

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May 30, 1981.

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5. INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS OF THE SPOTTED LINSANG
(*PRIONODON PARDICOLOR*)

The spotted linsang is recorded from primary and secondary forests in Nepal, Assam, northern Burma, and Indo-China at elevations of 150 m (above sea level) to 1850 m (Prater 1971). Little is known of the ecology or natural history of the linsang. Breeding is thought to occur in February and possibly again in August. An individual kept in captivity in Darjeeling refused to eat fish, eggs and fruit but lived on raw meat (Prater 1971). However, two banded linsang (*P. linsang*) in captivity in Malaysia readily ate white mice, birds, fresh fish and fresh eggs but rejected fruits such as banana and papaya (Liat 1973). Stomach contents of three wild-caught banded linsang included remains of spiny-furred rats, birds and a tree lizard, indicating that the linsang hunts on and above the forest floor (Liat 1973). Indeed, of 12 banded linsang collected in Malaysia, eight were shot while moving between three and eight metres above the forest floor; the remainder were trapped on the ground (Liat 1973).

Four observations of spotted linsang in the lowland forests and grasslands (150 m a.s.l.)

of Royal Chitawan National Park in southern Nepal (latitude 27°30'N; longitude 84°20'E) support this information. In one instance in late February (1975) an adult male and an adult female fell into a well and drowned. Such a close association suggests that mating activity was involved. The remaining observations indicate the animal is an opportunistic carnivore. On 17 January 1975 a linsang was driven out of dense vegetation surrounding a tiger (*Panthera tigris*) kill when domestic elephants moved through the area. The habitat was a mosaic of riverine forest and tall, dense grasses. This individual was probably an adult based on measurements given in Walker (1975: 1231). Another linsang, also judged to be an adult, was seen feeding on the carcass of a tiger kill at 1830 hr on 4 February 1975. The kill was located in an area of dense riverine forest. While the observation of 4 February was only 2 km east of that for 17 January it was unlikely that the same animal was involved because it would have had to cross a river about 150-200 m wide. The third observation occurred in mid-March (1979) in an

area of sal (*Shorea robusta*) forest interspersed with dense grasses. A linsang, presumably an adult, came to the remains of a tiger kill at about 1700 hr and began feeding. This loca-

tion was 2.8 km west of the 17 January observation. No other linsangs were observed at the three tiger kills, suggesting that these individuals were traveling alone.

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6. BLACKBUCK CENSUS IN POINT CALIMERE: A REJOINDER

Dr. S. S. Nair (*JBNHS* 73: 304-310, 1978), after doing a one man survey of Black-buck in the Point Calimere sanctuary in October 1974, concluded that a) only 340 animals exist in the Sanctuary in opposition to the Forest Department estimate of 1000+; b) this indicates a steep population decline, or incorrect censusing. This is used to argue that there is both a lack of proper conservation measures and that Forest Department estimates anywhere in India cannot be trusted (He appears to miss the contradiction between these two statements). He further warns that unless corrective measures are taken soon, black-buck will become a memory of the past, without unfortunately spelling out what these corrective measures should be.

I will not stress here the obvious point that more animals need not necessarily mean better management, as the carrying capacity of the habitat could easily be exceeded. I would like, however, to point out some of the methodological flaws in Dr. Nair's census.

The technique used by the Forest Department is that of a total visual count, a tested

and simple method recognised and used as a standard technique today and is known as Spatial census 2 in which a count is made of all the animals in a specified area at a specified point in time. The count is instantaneous in its properties. This technique, which is ideally suited for open habitat animals, like the black-buck at Point Calimere calls for no special qualification, training, skill or scientific knowledge except that the enumerators should be able to age and sex the animals they see. As we are not omniscient and omnipresent, we usually employ sufficient numbers of census parties and more than one individual in each census party.

On the other hand, some of the disadvantages of the one man survey may be considered. The black-buck is not a static animal, and duplications are likely, especially since individual recognition is extremely difficult. Visibility is reduced due to the undulating terrain at Point Calimere and the evergreen thickets. Waterlogged conditions in October would also prevent any observer from moving in a straight line. At one time normally, any